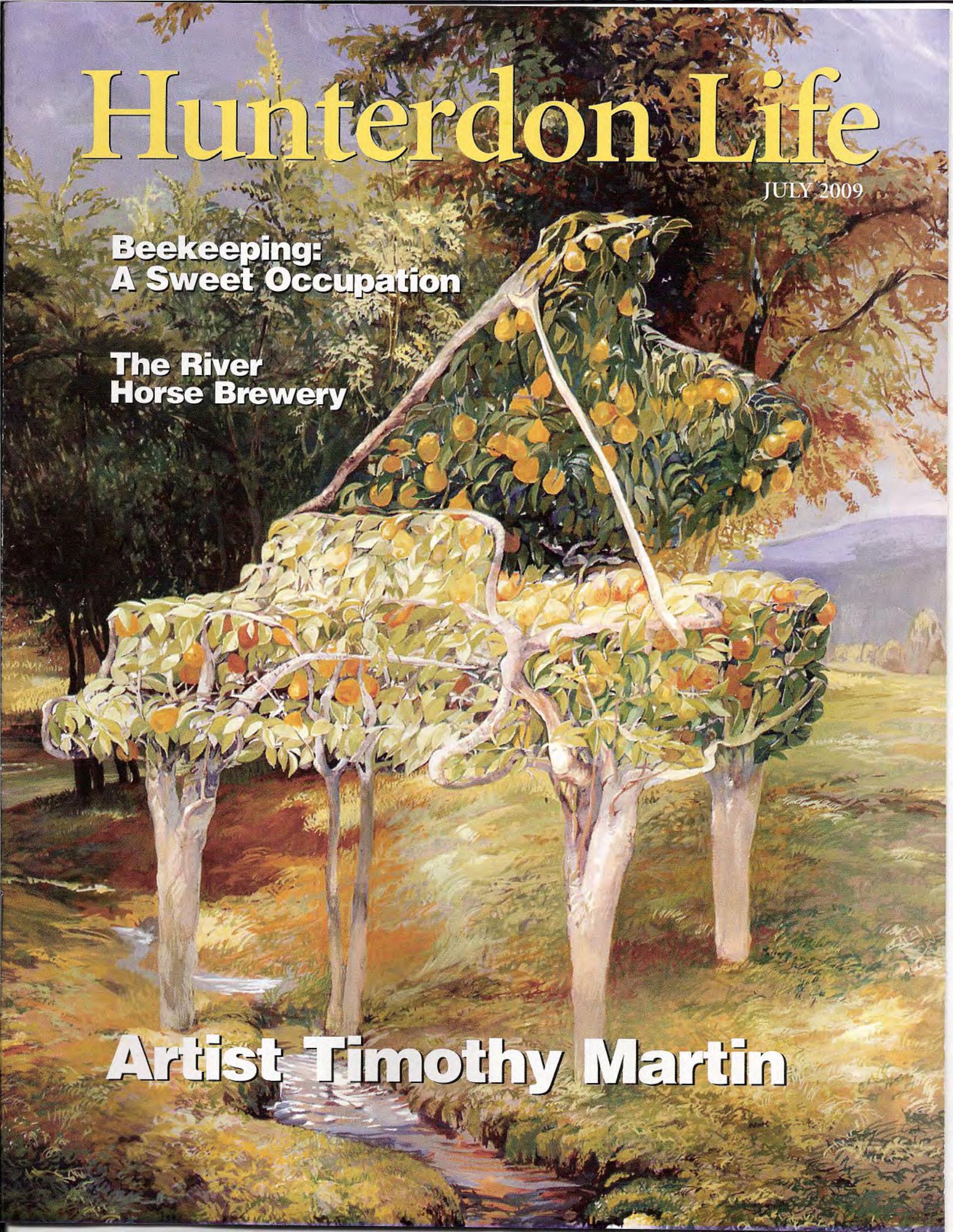


# Hunterdon Life



JULY 2009

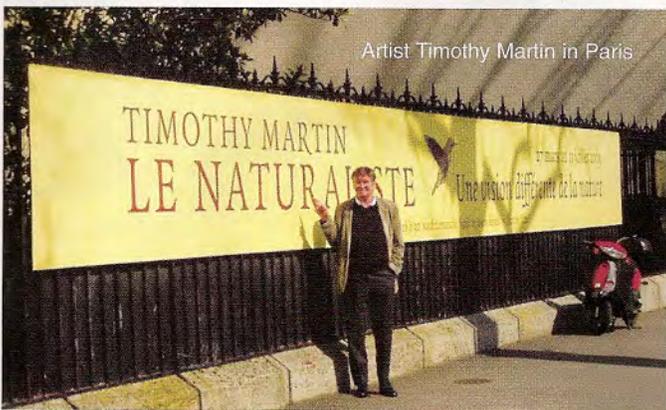
**Beekeeping:  
A Sweet Occupation**

**The River  
Horse Brewery**

**Artist Timothy Martin**



Garden State Settee



Artist Timothy Martin in Paris

## *His paintings are a place to reflect and dream*

BY SHIRLEY J. SASOR

Chairs invite us to slow down and relax, to exit the whirlwind of activities that define our days. They provide rest to weary bodies and souls.

As symbols in art, chairs stand in for a person when a person is not present. The image of an empty chair creates both a presence and an absence that invites us to explore and reflect on who sits there and when. Placed in an unconventional environment, we reflect on how it got there and why.

You'll often find a chair in a Timothy Martin painting, but no ordinary chair. His chairs are meticulously fashioned with the skill and artistry of an imaginative carpenter-turned-artist using feathers, acorns, rose petals, honeycombs and seashells to create form. He wants to create images that encourage us to remember the organic origins of things, and uses chairs because "they are elements of comfort," the 61-year old artist said. "When you want to relax, my paintings are a place to go to reflect and dream. They create an environment for a story that viewers can come up with for themselves. I just provide the elements."

The elements he includes are the images in nature he collects on his early morning walks with his two faithful terriers – things that intrigue him like drifting snow that accumulates on the banks of a brook. "Every morning, I try to find something I haven't noticed before. I look a little deeper for an element of nature I can incorporate into a design and I bring that imagery home with me. Inevitably, it comes forward in a piece."



Feather Chair

Home for the artist is a restored stone house on five acres in Delaware Township. The property includes a newer barn on the foundation of an older barn, which he helped design. His studio is a bright and spacious area on the upper floor. It includes skylights and windows on every side. His wife Janis Burenga has a business office on the ground floor.

After over a year of preparation, 60 of the artist's original paintings, many on loan from private collections, are now on display at the Mona Bismarck Foundation in Paris. The exhibit, *The Naturalist: A Different Way of Seeing Nature*, ends on July 11 after three months on display. One painting will remain in Paris in the foundation's permanent collection. It's a portrait of Mona Bismarck, American philanthropist. Mr. Martin painted the countess cloaked in a flowing gown of yellow flowers.

"The show was incredible," said the artist, who traveled to Paris with his wife and an entourage of supporters for the opening. "It was wonderful to have family members and friends with me because there is no way I could have described the show or events. It was breathtaking!"

The show moves to London next and from there, Krakow, Poland.

Mr. Martin has also exhibited at the Philadelphia Flower Show in 2008 and 2006; the Southeastern Flower Show in Atlanta, Georgia; the Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens in Richmond, Virginia; the Lauritzen Garden Show in Omaha, Nebraska; and in the windows of Macy's on Herald Square during their annual flower show in New York City.

Although popular as a botanical artist, he also creates paintings interpreting musical instruments. He was commissioned by Steinway & Sons to paint a baby grand piano — not a picture of a piano, but an actual piano that toured showrooms nationwide. The *Summertime Piano* was the first in a series of four he will paint for Steinway, each interpreting a different season. It quickly sold to a collector in Texas.

While he doesn't keep records of all his work, he estimates he's sold thousands of paintings through the years. His first sale came while he was a student at Mercer County Community College. "It was a portrait of a Mexican with a big sombrero and it sold for \$35 in a street fair," he said with a grin. Today, his original oils start at \$15,000 and can go as high as \$36,000. His gouache paintings sell for \$8,000 to \$12,000. Budget-conscious admirers can purchase his giclees and prints. Giclees sell for \$300 to \$2,000, and fine art prints are under \$50.

Does he have a favorite? "Not really. I never had a strong attachment to any work. My favorites are the ones still brewing in my mind. I have favorite elements in numerous paintings, like a certain cloud treatment, but as a final piece, the next one is always better." >



Pear Tree Piano



Timothy Martin in his Delaware Township studio

Portrait  
of Mona  
Bismarck by  
Timothy Martin



Before his first big break, which was an invitation in 1993 to exhibit in the windows at Tiffany's in New York City, Mr. Martin worked several jobs. He taught art for 7 1/2 years after graduating from college and was an illustrator in advertising. "Sitting behind a desk wasn't for me," he said. "Teaching, I loved, but it took a lot out of me. It didn't give me the time or energy I wanted to devote to my own painting."

His first job teaching was at his alma mater, East Amwell Township School. "Growing up, my grandparents had a 140-acre farm in East Amwell and I used to spend all my summers there. Then, my parents bought the farm in 1963. I can remember sitting on the monkey bars at the school as a kid, after making something with my hands, thinking, wouldn't it be great if I could do this all my life?"

He credits his grandmother and summers on the farm with his love of horticulture and gardening. "We'd sit for hours and look through Burpee seed catalogs together. She showed me how to garden and I never lost interest."

Mr. Martin also worked as a carpenter. "My father was in the Navy so we moved a lot. My parents were always buying the worst house on the block and fixing it up, then we'd move. I guess that's what inspired me to purchase and remodel a condemned house in Lambertville, which needed to be totally redone. To furnish the house, I'd snatch furniture from the streets that people threw out and repair it." That's when he started to observe the forms and shapes of furniture, like the curve of a chair's leg.

"All the different jobs I've had through the years and my early interests including my love for nature, gardening, furniture and remodeling — you'll find them all in my work. I've tried to take traditional shapes and identify them with nature. I want to inspire people to relate everyday objects back to natural world. And I hope they'll remember all that is good about life. I don't want my work to be threatening."

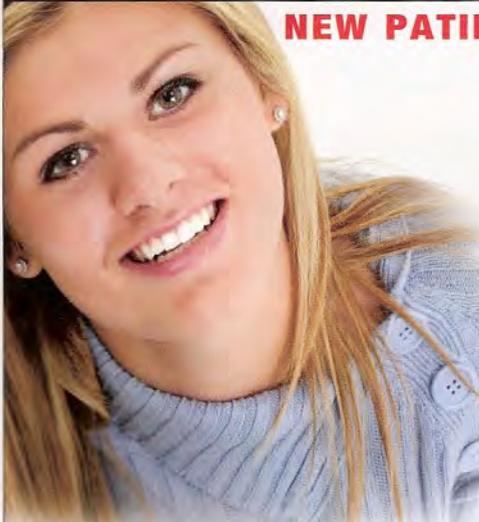
He likes to paint in oils, which he calls the Cadillac of paints, and usually works on as many as four paintings at a time. "It may take me two months to complete a piece, but I don't think of it as work. Once I get on a run with some ideas, one thing feeds another and my ideas stockpile. People ask all the time, 'How do you keep coming up with ideas?' To me, ideas are the easy part. I have hundreds stored in my head and on sketchpads. The time it takes to fully execute each one is the real limitation."

With nature so often the inspiration for his designs, it is easy to understand why Mr. Martin calls this area of New Jersey "heaven."

"Hunterdon County is the hub of the universe as far as I am concerned. This is my stomping ground — Route 604, Lambertville, the Delaware River and Wick-echoke Creek. I love it here. I always have."

To see his more of Timothy Martin's work, visit his Web site at [www.timothy-martin.com](http://www.timothy-martin.com).

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